

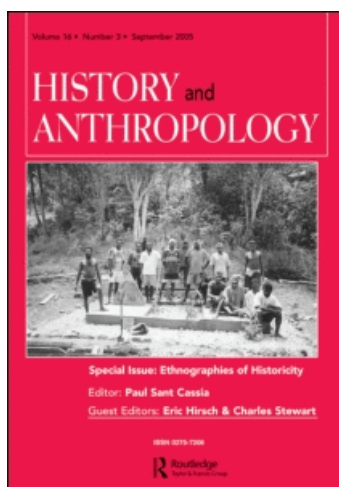
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The Past is Not Another Country: Exploring Indigenous Histories in Bolivia

Andrew Canessa

The concept of indigeneity is founded on an historical relation: my people were here before yours and are therefore legitimate occupiers of this land. This aspect of indigeneity, and its concomitant claim to justice, is most clearly articulated in the indigenous politics of post-colonial nations and the rhetoric of indigenous leaders. The discourses of politicians who invoke five centuries of oppression are frequently heard and easily accessible but much less so are the views of indigenous people far from the arena of metropolitan politics. In its focus on European colonisation and conquest the standard understanding of indigeneity necessarily invokes Western concepts of identity and being focused primarily on descent and a particular relationship to history, that of being a conquered people. This paper looks at how the people of one Aymara-speaking hamlet understand their history and their place in it. It explores the profound differences in historical consciousness to that of “mainstream” indigeneity and raises questions about how people relate to their past; the importance of the Conquest to indigenous people; and, consequently, the consequences a differently rooted identity may have for the contemporary politics of indigeneity.

Keywords: *Indigeneity; Oral history; Identity; Bolivia; Aymara*

Introduction

It is by now, commonplace to note the globalization of indigeneity (Niezen 2003; Tsing 2005) as people as diverse as the Norwegian Sami and Indian dalits organise under its banner. Given this diversity and historical contingency there is certainly a debate to be had about the analytical purchase of the term “indigenous” (see for example the debate

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started by Adam Kuper in *Current Anthropology*¹) and much ink has been spilt in trying to define indigeneity. In Latin America, as well as the rest of the world, who is and who is not indigenous and what it *means* to be indigenous is highly variable, context specific and changes over time.²

In advance of announcing a Decade for Indigenous People (1995–2004) the UN appointed Martínez Cobo to report to the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination of Minorities (1986) in which he defined indigenous people as follows: “Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them.”³ Martínez Cobo’s report has become a key reference document for other international agencies and nations in defining indigeneity (CEPAL 2005: 19; Saugestad 2001, 2004), and even anthropologists (Kenrick & Lewis 2004: 5). A key element in this and many other definitions is the sense of historical continuity with pre-colonial societies. What is much less clear is what *kind* of historical continuity or indeed what kind of historicity is being invoked.

Indigeneity is, without a doubt, a slippery concept. Recently Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn have written that “reckoning with indigeneity demands recognising it as a relational field of governance, subjectivities, and knowledges that involve us all—indigenous and non-indigenous—in the making and remaking of its structures of power and imagination” (2007: 3). Indigeneity is clearly relational; it sets up a distinction between groups and it is almost always defined in terms of characteristics not shared by dominant groups. These may very well have once been cultural forms that were once dominant (Friedlander 1973), which points to the very dynamic nature of indigeneity. Indigeneity also relates to power and imagination as de la Cadena and Starn point out. To be or not indigenous is to be in a position, usually of relative powerlessness but it is always a claim to justice and a claim to justice based on an historical relation. Indigeneity is about history and power.

At its simplest, a claim to indigeneity comes down to a minimal claim, relational and strategic: “we were here before *you*” (Clifford 2007: 197). Mary Louise Pratt underlines this point in noting that all the “generic descriptors used to refer to indigenous peoples—indigenous, native, aboriginal, first nations—all refer etymologically to priority in time and place This, of course makes the term relational and retrospective” (2007: 398). One can clearly not have a sense of indigeneity without an invasion or occupation at some point in time. It is simply not meaningful to talk of indigenous Americans before the arrival of the Spanish because until the Conquest there was no sense that they shared any common identity or position: in 1491 there were no Indians in the Americas; in 1492 there were tens of millions.

There is an apparent arbitrariness to the historicity because it depends on a key moment in history. In contemporary Bolivia, the descendants of Incas who arrived in the territory in the 1490s will readily be considered indigenous; the descendants of Spaniards who arrived a few decades later will most likely not be considered indigenous. Indigeneity is not simply an historical relationship of “we were here before you” but the perduring power relations that arise out of that moment in history. As I have

argued elsewhere (2007) a claim to indigeneity is a claim to justice based not simply on historical priority but a sense of historical injustice.

Indigenous people today are consequently not best understood as cultural survivors clinging onto a quaint, particular but atavistic culture but, rather, as inheritors of a colonial situation which has continued over time even though the symbols of power and oppression may have changed considerably. In fact, it is a base illusion if not condescending to suggest that any people would be so lacking in cultural dynamism and historicity as to remain fossilised for centuries. The significant continuity lies in the historical consciousness rather than specific cultural forms.

In her helpful intervention, Mary Louise Pratt (2007) lists the various contours of this historicity but she, like many others, assumes a very Western linear history where events occur in succession and the past is distant, "another country" as it were. In this she is surely to be forgiven because many indigenous leaders of all stripes reproduce this historical model as well as international agencies and constitutional documents. It does, however, raise a number of problems. It might be simple to see indigenous people as descendants of pre-colonial peoples but it is by no means clear that people will share such a conception of identity and descent. There are many ways of understanding descent and the genealogical one is only one. People may feel they have inherited a way of life, a relationship to the gods, or a political position in terms of historical injustice. For them and their communities this form of descent may be far more salient than bloodlines. Focusing on genealogical descent also implies a racialised, that is, biological, understanding of identity which might simply not be shared by many people. Since the sense that identity is shared between people on the basis of "blood" or latterly "genes" has a particular European history, it would be surprising indeed if these were widely shared by other peoples.

In the village of Pocobaya in Bolivia where I have conducted fieldwork since 1989 people do not believe they share blood that is inherited from parents and their notion of relatedness to prior peoples is not one based on genealogical descent. They do believe that they share a particular kind of body fat common to other *jaqi* (indigenous people) and that fat is produced through a particular diet, communal way of life, and relations with the ancestors. It is by no means clear that they would understand their indigeneity—if indeed they understand it at all—as a relation between European colonisers and indigenous natives.

The genealogical model of identity is, as Tim Ingold asserts, fundamentally a colonial one (2000: 151) but yet curiously one that some anticolonial indigenous activists adopt. What is interesting to note is that radical indigenous activists and international institutions such as the ILO share an understanding of indigeneity as one based on descent and specifically from precolonial populations. It remains to be seen, however, whether all people who might be considered indigenous think of themselves in these, even if their putative leaders express their collective identity in these ways.

The issue of self-identification is, however, key; and there is a significant tension between self-identification and the concept of indigeneity as being founded on historical descent and genealogical lineage. To the extreme chagrin of indigenous politicians such as the Bolivian Felipe Quispe (interview with author),⁴ many urban people,

intellectuals and leftists, have begun to identify as indigenous for political reasons as indigeneity has come to encompass a wide range of political positions such as anti-globalisation, a particular brand of nationalism, exhaustion with political corruption, and resistance to anti-coca policies, to name but a few. In a country such as Bolivia where the vast majority can claim at least some indigenous descent it is perhaps not so surprising that large numbers of people identify as indigenous; but it is also the case that individuals who are children of European parents also identify as indigenous as a way of expressing a political position. In fact, a variety of political positions (on some levels contradictory) are expressed through identification with indigenous heritage and culture; and with the election of Evo Morales as President, indigeneity has reached prominence as a national ideology.

In a recent book, Bruce Miller (2003) explores state policies which render indigenous people “invisible” by refusing to recognise them as such. What I explore below is an opposite example: one of people who are recognised by the state as being indigenous but who do not themselves normally claim that identity. At root is the issue of the state deciding who is and who is not indigenous and of indigeneity being conceived as a particular relationship with the state, rather than a system of meanings generated from within a particular culture.

The state imagines itself in historical terms and in the Americas a key moment is, of course, Independence from the colonial power. The most important public holiday in Bolivia is 6 August, Independence Day, but many indigenous people do not celebrate it in any way at all, seeing it as a commemoration for white people in Bolivia. For the vast majority of indigenous Bolivians Independence simply meant the transfer of power from one white elite to another and they have been largely excluded from the symbols of republican statehood ever since.

The election of Evo Morales as President in 2005 is an obvious exception and he, as well as many other groups, have struggled to appropriate or even be included in state celebrations. Nevertheless, the Bolivian army found that it could not guarantee the security of the indigenous President in attending the official state celebrations in the constitutional capital of Sucre in 2008 and so he was unable to participate, staying in the city of La Paz which comprises a much larger indigenous population. This struggle is also evidenced in the difficulties the constitutional president has with the Supreme Court, the Senate and the Constituent Assembly, all of which have impeded indigenous control of state institutions.

As various indigenous movements, those led by the President and others, struggle with the state, a particular historical framework becomes increasingly salient: dates such as 1492, 1826 (Bolivian Independence), and 1953 (the Bolivian Revolution) become iconic moments around which concepts of identity and justice are wrapped. The meanings and consequences of such a history are, of course, hotly debated but their basic significance in accounting for the state and nation rarely so.

In a recent historical account, Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson (2007) see the election of Morales as a Revolution which is the almost inevitable consequence of a course of history that flows from the colonial period to the present day; memories of past revolts of the 1790s as well as those of the Bolivian Revolution sixty years ago are

key elements in an historical consciousness that pits indigenous people against the mestizo–creole state. It is tempting to read current Bolivian politics in terms of indigenous peoples against creoles locked in a tightly choreographed dance where the costumes change but the steps remain the same as all dance to the loud music of the brass band. But James Dunkerley (2007) warns against the seductiveness of such a simplified view since the ethnic politics of Bolivia defies such a vision. Ethnic identity in Bolivia has never been clear-cut and indigenous people have long had a profoundly ambivalent relationship with the mestizo–creole state which includes significant moments of supporting and maintaining it as well as those undermining it. This rather messier view of historical momentum has the dancers less visible, the costumes damp with each other's sweat, and when the cold light of an Andean dawn arrives everyone is drunk on the floor, arms and legs entwined in a violent but intimate embrace; and it is by no means clear that there were ever only two groups dancing. As in all good Bolivian fiestas the band plays on, if not always in tune; and the bleary-eyed participants have difficulty focusing on who is who.

With this messier view of history, indigenous identity becomes much more difficult to pin down. Even at particular moments such as “Red October” 2003 when mass mobilisation brought down the President and prompted the *New York Times* to declare that “Indigenous people ... mov[ed] to wrest power from the largely European elite” in an article with the title, “Where Incas Ruled, Indians are Hoping for Power” (Forero 2003), indigenous historical consciousness is less apparent than one might think. In the years leading up to the overthrow of President Sánchez de Lozada people mobilised against arbitrary rule and neoliberal policies that hurt the poorer sectors of the population most. It was by no means clear that they were informed by a particularly strong indigenous historical consciousness; and in those days Evo Morales was the leader of the coca growers' union, only just discovering the potency of an indigenous rhetoric. One must be very careful then to impute a particular historical consciousness on all or even a majority of indigenous people and consider the multiple ways in which people understand their history and, consequently, their indigenous identity.

Being Indigenous or not in Pocobaya

Pocobaya is an Aymara-speaking village where I have conducted regular field work since 1989. It is located in a strong Aymara-speaking area and half a day's walk from Achacachi, the heartland of Aymara radical politics. This community of a little over 200 souls had until 2007 no road access and the people practise a mostly self-sufficient lifestyle supplemented by the wages from seasonal male wage migration and some artisan work.

Pocobayaños hear the news on Aymara language radio and have witnessed if not participated in the rallies of Aymaras in the cantonal capital, Sorata, as well as its siege in 2003. Pocobayaños most certainly have an historical vision but it does not conform neatly to the one that has been most prominent among indigenous leaders or their opponents in recent decades.

Between approximately 1880 and 1953 Pocobaya was a hacienda. The overthrowing of the hacienda-owner is an important part of Pocobaya oral history which marks their

sense of historical agency and the forging of a new relationship with the state. Pocobaya's people have a long history of relating to the state, be it republican, colonial, or Inca. The local townsfolk of the nearby provincial capital, Sorata, readily identify the people of Pocobaya as culturally different from them, a difference that is sometimes racialised in terms of pre- and post-Conquest descendants. Pocoabyeños have a keen memory of discrimination and racism on the part of residents of Sorata in the distant and recent past and maintain a clear sense of distinction between them and Sorateños. In the 2001 census the community was returned as almost 100% indigenous; one person, almost certainly the school teacher, was returned as not being indigenous (despite being a native Aymara speaker).

It appears, however, that the people of Pocobaya were not among those in the Bolivian population that were asked if they identified as indigenous since, as is suggested by the CEPAL (2005) report on the Bolivian 2001 census, such a question would have appeared redundant: census takers recorded as indigenous native speakers of an indigenous language and those whose first language was an indigenous one (even if they no longer chose to speak it). I was not able to observe the census-taking process in Pocobaya but I was able to ask people what they had been asked and no one recalled having been asked if they were indigenous or if they were a member of an original community.

If they had, many, and quite possibly the large majority would have replied no; for in Pocobaya, "indígena" applies to the lowland groups who inhabit the Amazon basin and for whom the term is preferred by activists; but who, in the eyes of Pocobayeños, are considered decidedly inferior in social and cultural terms. This has obvious implications for when people similar to Pocobayeños migrate to the tropical lowlands and come into contact or direct conflict with such people. Nor, do Pocobayeños identify as "Aymara": one cannot even say "I am Aymara" in the language spoken in Pocobaya since that phrase does not parse; rather, people say they are Aymara *speakers* but that is some way from identifying as indigenous since they put me—someone who is unambiguously European—in the category of Aymara speaker (*aymarparliri*).

When speaking of themselves they typically refer to themselves as people of Pocobaya (*pocobayankirinaka*) or *jaqi*, a word which can be glossed as "people" but clearly excludes most urban people, even some relatively recent migrants to large towns and cities. That is, people in Pocobaya do not recognise a shared ethnic identity with the majority of those urban residents who were recorded as being indigenous in the 2001 census; and a considerable majority of those recognised as Aymaras are urban residents, 59.3% of the recorded Aymara population. In fact, the residents of El Alto, the satellite city of La Paz with a large indigenous majority, are not generally considered by Pocobayeños to be *jaqi* even if they have been the source of some of the most radical indigenous politics in recent years.

The word *jaqi* cannot therefore be seen as a simple translation of Aymara, much less indigenous. To what extent, then, can people in Pocobaya be regarded as indigenous if they do not define themselves as such? The solution, perhaps, lies in historical consciousness. I would argue that indigeneity is best understood as a contemporary social relation articulated in terms of the past. I would contend that it cannot simply be

about being a marginalised, culturally distinct, group because there is no particular reason why any such group should be described as being specifically indigenous. Whereas I agree with Kuper (2003) that indigeneity is not an anthropological concept in that it arbitrarily distinguishes between groups it *is* an appropriate subject of anthropological investigation as a particular form of group identity; one based on historical consciousness and a particular sense of (in)justice rooted in that historical awareness. This, however, need not imply a genealogical relation with the past and there is no necessary reason that such an understanding be essentialising.

There are a number of ways of discussing identity and the ways people distinguish themselves from those they consider “other”; Pocobayeños do not have descent groups and do not see themselves as sharing a substance such as blood which makes them *jaqi* or, Pocobayeños, much less Aymaras. Indeed, some key members of the community such as the shaman, Teodosio, are known to have mixed ancestry and this has absolutely no effect on either his position in the community or his identity as cultural traditionalist who can talk to the ancestors; one is not more or less *jaqi* simply on the basis of genealogy, even relatively recent genealogy. Pocobayeños do, however, recognise their ancestors but these are the collective dead who inhabit the mountains and other key geographical locations. One is related to these ancestors not by genealogy but by being part of a shared community and engaging in ritual exchanges with the mountain (and other ancestors) (cf. Paulson 2006).

Newcomers can be assimilated into the community so long as they conform to community ritual. There are many examples in the past of people successfully integrating themselves from the outside. The key issue is having some claim to land that may be inherited or acquired through marriage; blood genealogy plays no role whatsoever.

I do not want to focus on the many ways that Pocobayeños distinguish themselves from others through lived experience but on their sense of history and how they understand themselves in historical terms. If, as I argue, indigeneity is fundamentally a social relation imagined in historical terms then it remains to be seen what historical consciousness people in Pocobaya have; we certainly cannot assume that their sense of identity is one founded on a colonial moment five hundred years ago.

For non-literate peoples history is transmitted through stories of the past, that is, oral history, oral tradition, and myths. For Lévi-Strauss, myths were “instruments for the obliteration of time” and historical myths have functioned both to account for people’s origins as well as to make that mythical past, not only intelligible but accessible. Different peoples understand history in different ways. For many people in Pocobaya oral tradition and myth offer an understanding of the past that has not gone forever but is simply in another place. The past is immanent and intimate.

In Amazonia, mythic history accounts for, among other things, Europeans and the power and technology they possess (Guss 1989; Gow 2001). It is by now a commonplace to assert that myths change over time and in a recent work Peter Gow (2001) has demonstrated how mythic history among the Piro changes as new kinds of people entered the Piro world and were consequently accounted for in myth. The stories people tell in Pocobaya similarly deal with the important existential problem of “who we are” as well as “who the people around us are”. Insofar as mythic history deals with

origins and identities it articulates what from the western perspective might be considered an indigenous consciousness; it is this historical consciousness that makes, for example, a people's claim to a particular territory legitimate. If indigeneity is to mean anything at all it has to involve a sense of historical consciousness of a primacy based on original (or at least previous) occupation of a territory.

Myths change, but they do not necessarily change uniformly across the community. That is, myths may need to change to account for the activities of missionaries but there is still a commonly recognisable corpus of myths, even if the authority for remembering and recounting the myths may be delegated to particular people. In Pocobaya myths doubtless change but what is striking is how different the myths are that people tell of the very distant past. Older people tell very different stories than younger people but there are important variations within generations as well. That is, even very small communities may not have a shared sense of history and, consequently, a shared sense of indigenous identity. This study differs markedly from other anthropological studies which show how a shared historical understanding is fundamental to many people's shared identity and ability to engage politically with state bureaucracies and other groups, especially as indigenous people (e.g. Rappaport 1998).

In what follows I explore how Pocobayaños relate to the past and in what sense they have a sense of who they are that can usefully be described as a shared "indigenous consciousness".

Pocobaya and the Past

The Dawn

Broadly speaking adult Pocobayaños divide their history into three periods: *chullpa pacha*, *inka pacha* and *patruna pacha* and this basic historical framework is found all over the Andes. The earliest period mentioned by Pocobayaños is the dawn of time, when lived the *chullpas*. People talk of *chullpas* all over the Andes and Pocobayaños share beliefs that *chullpas* lived in circular houses with the windows to the east. When the sun rose they were burned to a crisp.⁵ When I asked Pedro Quispe, one of Pocobaya's oldest residents to tell me who lived there long, long ago he began with the *chullpas* whom he describes as ancestors (the grandfathers of the grandfathers, but they were few) and they saw the dawn of the world. Pedro describes the time of the *chullpas* as one where the land was shared and there was enough for everyone.

The *chullpas* are clearly of the very distant past but they are also, in an important way, in the present. Several middle-aged Pocobayaños describe spirits such as the *Pachamama* (earth mother) as being *chullpas*. Those *chullpas* who escaped the sun's rays hid in the earth, underground. The *Pachamama*, is the source of the earth's productivity and she is fêted with alcohol and animal sacrifices. To describe the *Pachamama* as a *chullpa* is to acknowledge that the past has not simply disappeared but is also present, merely in a different place. There is also an important sense of kinship with the *Pachamama*. The *chullpas*, the *Pachamama*, and other spirits which sustain life are the spirits of Pocobayaños' deceased ancestors. It is this intimacy with the past and

the spirits of the earth which is a clear element in older Pocobayeños' sense of who they are as human beings.

The difference between older and middle-aged people's views on *chullpas* is that older people were able to give much more detail and present a rather more complex relationship between *chullpas* and other beings that live in the earth. Nevertheless, many adults were able to give accounts of the offering they make to the *chullpas*, such as a pig's trotter and maize beer. *Chullpas* are sometimes considered to be the cause of certain skin diseases and therefore need "feeding" to satisfy them. *Chullpas* can sometimes be disturbed when, for example, dynamiting a new road. According to Teodosio when they were opening the new road in Quruma the *chullpas* became very upset and stole the souls of some of the workers. They had to be placated with a great deal of alcohol and some gold.

Chullpas are described as being a very different kind of people, they lived in darkness, (the night is their day) they did not know God, they were big and hairy but they were still people. Doña Francisca asserts that they were "People with big feet and heads". Older people in particular describe the *chullpas* as people, that is, they are *jaqi*, the word Pocobayeños use to describe themselves and to distinguish themselves from *mestizos* and *creoles*. Herculiano (in his forties) describes them as "... not people of this world; these others were not wanted by God and were non-believers. Those people of the past were of the underworld, they were called gentiles, we call them gentiles", but then he adds, "these *jaqi* are also our bretheren, they are not really then different" (*Ukax mä jaqi masisaskarikiw janiw ukaxa wasa jaqikikapunirakiti*).

To some extent the *chullpas* exist(ed) in a sort of parallel world; not only was their world one of darkness but wild animals today were their domestic animals. Manuel, in his seventies, told me: "For them there is no longer life for them here. If they had beaten God, well where would we be now? Perhaps we would be suffering as they suffer. Their animals are now in the wild. The *wikhu* bird is their chicken. The skunk is their pig—you see, they have everything." A key element when discussing the *chullpas* is that they were once the predominant people but are now banished to the underworld but they have not disappeared from the world altogether; they are of the past but equally exist in the present, albeit in a different spatial dimension.

When talking about the *chullpas* older women, and only older women, talked about how in those days animals and people could speak to each other and often intermarried. "Toads wore trousers and in those days people walked/lived with toads and foxes too" (Doña Juana), "Young women went with snakes and gave birth to little snakes". "Foxes wore ties and seduced young women whose babies barked when they were born." The time of the *chullpas* is one clearly where different relations pertained between humans and animals and where different social rules applied. There are also, however, echoes with later ages when *hacendados* or their agents seduced Indian girls (such as was the case with Teodosio's mother). The fox's tie associates him with the non-Indian world of *creoles*. Perhaps Juana here is expressing an historical sense of the exploitation of women even in the pre-colonial age.

Doña Francisca and others also mentioned the treasures, pots of gold and silver, which the *chullpas* have which people in Pocobaya will occasionally still up when they

are digging in their fields. The issue of treasure and wealth is also an important theme when discussing the Incas who succeeded the *chullpas* on the surface of the land. Indians today are poor; it is almost their key defining feature in discussion with many Pocobayeños. In the past, however, Indians, that is, *jaqi*, were wealthy and in this understanding lies the key to a very contemporary sense of social injustice; Indians are poor and they are poor not because there is something in their condition as *jaqi* to be poor but because great wealth was once violently taken away from them. The sun which killed the *chullpas* banished the survivors underground (*utnakapana jiwaraskix pach-pankaskiw sarakisa jaqhipa manqhan jakaspachay*). The sun also brought the Incas who included the sun as one of their central deities. For many Pocobayeños the sun is equated with the Christian god and this is a significant point because, according to them, it was not the Spanish that brought Christianity but the Incas.

Incas

The Incas are remembered for two principal things: their wealth and their power. Incas wielded whips and the whip today is a symbol of legitimate ancestral authority. In the days of the Incas they could move rivers and rocks with their whips:

They say that [the Incas] could change the course of rivers, similarly the rocks could move by themselves after receiving the lash of the Inka's whip. By moving the rocks they could change the course of the rivers but now we cannot do those things. The Inka was very strong. They say that they could make the rock form itself. But now it is not like this. The Spanish scattered the Inkas; (*chhukhutatawayxiwa*). The time of the Inkas is lost; now we are in another time. That world has changed into another (*uka muntuxa wasa jaquiptawayxi*).

With these words Celestino Chino, in his forties, describes the power of the Incas and how their time folded into another. Even as he wistfully recounts the departure of the Incas he makes reference to the turning of the worlds where history does not move in a linear fashion but major epochs fold into others. Many anthropologists (e.g. Harris 1995; Bouysse-Cassagne & Harris 1987) have noticed that in the rural Andes people do not see the long *durée* of history as series of measured events but of worlds changing one into the other. Between these events there is no history in the Western sense and not even a sense of marking time in years. The arrival of the Spanish at a particularly time that can be denoted by a date and that this date relates in a measured way to the presence is a concept that was never even hinted at by my interlocutors. Moreover, many people, including those of Celestino's generation do not have a sense of the time irredeemably past. In Aymara, the past is *nayra*, the same word used for "eyes". One sees the past and cannot "look into the future". It is the future which is "another country" whereas as the past is familiar and known.

Older people talk of the past with striking familiarity. This is how Pedro remembers the Incas:

The Inka King was like that, up there on top of the mountain. Then we were children, we were like that small boy and it is then that the Inka lived although we did not see how he died. The Inkas stopped on top of that mountain ... he was able to send big stones all over

simply with the use of his whip ... that is how he was ... But in those times he didn't kill the Spaniards, they must have shot him ... But when he was about to die, then he said, "there will be no more gold and silver", and so saying sent it all into the mountain with his whip. That is why the gold is in the mountain; that is why it is down there.

Pedro is here speaking as if he personally saw the Inca as a little boy, using the grammatical construction which denotes first-hand experience (*ukjaxa nanakaxa akhama chikusipxkpachataya, khayamakisisipxkpachathwa jisk'itakisipxkpachathwa*). This is somewhat unusual and Pedro is asserting an immediate connection with the Incas. Pedro speaks with regret of the coming of the Spanish. He suggests that the Spanish may not have been bad but "God made the Spanish fight with the Jews. That is why they were fighting but if they hadn't killed the Inka king then things would have been different. He would have given us lots, he would have been alive ... since he has been dead we do not know him. (The wealth) is lost and there is none." The poverty of Pocobayeños today is understood in terms of the Spanish killing the Inca and forcing him to hide the wealth inside the mountains.

For older people such as Teodosio the Incas were not simply scattered and lost; the Incas are present in the mountains and sometimes appear to him: they are dressed in finery and appear at the mouth of a cave. Teodosio says they speak directly to him. If one is very fortunate and careful one can make a deal with the Inca and he can give gold. This is dangerous because the Inka will ultimately take one's life in exchange for his wealth.

The Inkas are living. You can go and look and shout and they will answer, saying "hello!" There is a door and a single house which can be seen from below. One day the Inka appeared to me.

I saw her with a red dress and a brown hat and a shawl. It was raining and on top of the mountain called Ququr she was singing: la la la ... Before I could ask where she was from she turned and disappeared. I was very close. "Why did you go there alone", I was told when I returned. "That is an enchanted place. It must have been a yanqha (female chthonic deity) that Inka lady. She could have killed you."

That people can hear the Inca's voice is reported in other parts of the Andes (Arnold 2006: 180) but it is more common to hear the Inca speak as the wind, especially in the windy month of August when the chthonic deities are most present, but it is apparently rare for people to say they have actual waking conversations.

The Inca king was ultimately killed by the Spanish but, like the *chullpas*, did not disappear altogether and some Pocobayeños say that the Incas simply entered the rocks (*ukapi awist'askam q'arqaruw puritayna*). That is, rather like the *chullpas* going underground the Incas simply went to a different place, into rock or, as Pastor told me, to Paititi:

In the old days the Inka Atahuallpa used to go to Illampu on top of which is an old city ... They say that from the capital of the Tiwanaku Empire they went with llamas to Illampu on the way to Paititi which is in the jungle near Mapiri ... I have seen it from afar but have not arrived there because one cannot. They say there is a big gold bell in the centre of the plaza and four big jars of gold. They say that the jars are always full but no one can reach this place because it is enchanted and protected by snakes.

Patrunapacha: The Spanish and the Hacendados

Pocobayeños and others distinguish between *jaqi* people, and *q'ara* who are a different kind of people, living in cities and towns who do not have "proper" relationships with each other or with the spirits of the earth and mountains. The Incas are unambiguously *jaqi*; "He was surely *jaqi*, that Inka King, he would have favoured us" (*jaqi kastatapaya uka inka riyixa, jaqi phawuratapaya*). It is also important to note that, for many older people, the Inka was a Christian. Christianity, many believed, came with the first dawn which ushered in a Christian era. Herculiano, in his forties, however demurs: "in those days they only worshipped the sun. It was not their custom to worship God the Father". Herculiano calls this period of the Spanish the time of the Yankees: This time of the Yankees is the time when Christopher Columbus entered then they possessed the land of Bolivia, Qullasuyu Then when the Spanish came, another people from another country entered the land of Bolivia. Then from that time appeared the Bible.

Pedro, as with other Pocobayeños of his generation however does not associate Christianity with the arrival of the Spaniards:

We know the Christians since the time of our ancestors. They were owners of these lands and they organised the fields in terms of *sayañas*. They distributed the land and after then we had the land. We are continuing the path they left us but [the *q'aras*] did not want us to learn to read. After the Agrarian Reform we learned how to read and they left with their laws. The Agrarian Reform gave us new laws: the patrón would say that if the Indians knew how to write then they could contradict us, that is why they took away our lands In those days the patrón was not afraid to whip us or insult us. "Stupid ass" he would call us. We had to plough the furrows without a single mistake. When we got behind in the fields we would be beaten with a whip. Now we work for ourselves, the places which belonged to the hacienda are now ours. We eat from that earth (*nanakaya jichhaxa uraqi manq'asisipxkthxa*).

Pedro here, as with many others, associated the power of the Spaniards with literacy rather than a more powerful deity or superior technology. This is one theme that crosses all generations: the power of literacy which can be used to dominate people and, as a consequence, to liberate them. In the words of Edmundo: "The Spanish came to abuse our people; the abused us and treated us as animals. Our ancestors did not speak or read Spanish, and that is why they treated our ancestors like animals."

This comment illustrates why language in itself is not necessarily salient in defining indigeneity, particularly since being an illiterate monolingual has historically meant an inability to defend one's land. The schools' movement in the first decades of the twentieth century was explicitly aimed at learning Spanish in order to reclaim land stolen in previous decades. Today many parents (and teachers) are opposed to bilingual education because they fear that teaching children an indigenous language is designed to prevent them from acquiring the necessary linguistic skills (i.e. Spanish) to defend themselves and make economic and social progress. The inability to speak an indigenous language does not, therefore, have the same political and symbolic consequences as it might in their parts of the world where speaking an indigenous language is central to claiming an indigenous identity.

The time of the Spanish and the time of the hacendados, which in standard western historical accounts are divided by a major historical event, Independence are simply conflated. There is no mention of the Libertador Simón Bolívar or the Mariscal Santa Cruz whose pictures hang in every classroom in the country; there is no mention of any war against the colonial rulers.

Eginio Ticona offers a typical account:

The [Spanish] killed the Inka king Atawallpa. They had offered them gold “We will give you gold.” But when the Spanish accepted the gold they killed him anyway. They quartered him with four horses Atawallpa, Tupak Katari.⁶ Since that time they stayed to live in America. But we suffered much. For example: pongueaje, that is each community sent people to work for the patrón; they had to take all the food and cook it for him, suckling pigs and lamb. If they did not take these things there were punishments. The overseer (mayordomo) would make us work with his whip; he would whip us arbitrarily. Even the priests were patrones And so, if a *jaqi* did not do as he was told the patrón would simply take his land away. Moreover, the patrones sold the *jaqis* from one hacienda to another. They bought and sold the *jaqis* like animals.

When I asked people when the Spanish left, the most common reply was “with the Agrarian Reform”. The Agrarian Reform of 1953 took land from the patrones and gave it to the peasants it was that event that marked the end of colonial rule. The colonial wars of the nineteenth century for people in Pocobaya were largely irrelevant since the rule of the Bolivia simply passed from the hands of Spaniards born in Spain to Spaniards born in the New World. In fact the nineteenth century marked a period of major land-grabbing of Indian lands and it was probably in the 1880s that Pocobaya ceased to be a free community and became a hacienda where the patrón and his overseer had feudal rights over the Indians. Unlike many communities around Lake Titicaca whose lands were taken at the end of the nineteenth century, Pocobayaños do not specifically recall the time in which their community became a hacienda; this is conflated with the overthrow of the Incas. They are equally silent on the overthrow of colonialism and the birth of the republic.

For Pocobayaños the great anticolonial moment is not when the Andes were no longer ruled directly from Madrid but when the Pocobayaños took control over their lands. The third great epoch of history ends therefore in what we might recognise as the 1950s and in accounts of this period Pocobayaños tell tales of how they fought and killed and burned down the house of the hacendado in order to take their lands back.⁷

Youths' Version of History

The oldest Pocobayaños and those more or less above the age of thirty shared a basic historical framework, although with some differences. All the people in this group noted that beings of the past were still accessible in the earth below, be they *chullpas* or Incas. Younger Pocobayaños had a very different historical consciousness. Most assured me that they knew absolutely nothing about Inkas and *chullpas* and to ask their grandparents. When pressed they knew some very basic things about them such as the Inca moving stones with his whip but I found no one in this age group who could

produce an historical sequence or express any kind of personal relationship with the past. They were generally reluctant to respond at all to my questions; they claimed simply not to know.

It may of course be that young people in Pocobaya, as perhaps is so with young people elsewhere, are simply not interested in history but it is also the case that this generation of young people has been exposed to much more schooling than the three years or less their parents received. Schooling, and the time spent on it, orients them away from activities related to the land and the spirits who animate it (Arnold 2006). The lived relationship with land and spirits simply becomes irrelevant. One of the clearest effects of schooling is that people look to “progress” through moving to the cities and speaking Spanish; in effect, upwardly mobile social progress which implies a change of ethnic status. As part of this project I also asked young school age people what their aspirations were. Without exception they all said they wanted to leave the village and live in a city or, at any rate, somewhere else. If younger people want to leave the village they may not be keen to emphasise profound ethnic differences between themselves and others, whereas for the older generation, who lived under the whip of the landowner, history provided a way of understanding the profound difference between Indians and the whites and *mestizos*, who dominated them. This history, too, rooted people to an intimate relationship with the land and its past inhabitants, that is, it gave them a clear sense of what we can call indigeneity, a sense of justice rooted in historical consciousness, even if they would not use that word themselves.

Younger people however, have been brought up in a world where social progress is offered (if not always delivered) and they do not have the personal experiences of the violence and exclusion experienced by older generations. What is significant about these accounts of the past is that, although there are some clear common elements, there is considerable diversity within this small population, some of it generalisable across generations and genders. I found no evidence of a continuous narrative relating contemporary political processes and institutions to Incaic ones, that is, offered in the very detailed ethnohistorical work of scholars such as Arnold (2006) and Abercrombie (1998). Both of these works show an evolution in the relationship between a particular indigenous group and the Inka, colonial and republican states. Implicit in the argument is that indigeneity is rooted in the continuous, albeit evolving, engagement and resistance with the state where Incaic models are consciously assimilated to contemporary ones. It is not always clear how generalisable these ethnographic examples are supposed to be but, more importantly, nor is there a sense that there may be internal disagreement within the community in how they conceive of history and their relation to it. I suggest that, not only does historical consciousness vary considerably across the Andes, but that it will vary within communities too, across generations and genders. Women, after all, have a different relationship with the (post)colonial state and the way it employs structures and imagery which render Indians more feminine, and Indian women “more Indian” (Canessa 2005; de la Cadena 1995) as well as being more likely to have been subject to the sexual predations of Conquistadores and their successors in power.

Conclusions

It is clearly the case that indigeneity is highly multifarious in Bolivia and that there are many people who have a profound sense of the past and a highly intimate relation with their ancestors, the Incas' predecessors, the *chullpas*. This sense of the past in the present reflects the importance of understanding being *jaqi* in terms of a shared social relationship with the ancestors. One cannot simply *be jaqi*; being *jaqi*, as it is understood in Pocobaya, involves living in a particular kind of way and, above all, engaging through ritual and labour with the living community as well as the community of spirits which is elsewhere. People's dynamic relationship with the past is what underpins their social relations in the present; and offers them a powerful sense of justice in a critique of their economic and political exclusion. Historical consciousness becomes manifest in present social relations.

The people of Pocobaya share with other marginalised people (e.g. Ingold 2004; Kenrick & Lewis 2004) a sense of identity which is dynamic and processual and rooted in contemporary social relations, even as they invoke an historical perspective to make sense of who they are. Lineal descent from Incas or their predecessors is not the point and is not seen to be the point by anyone in Pocobaya. What is much more important is a sense of kinship with people who lived before them and who, in their view, shared an understanding of how to relate to people and the spirits who animate the landscape. This historicised consciousness of who they are is then an indigenous one: one that is neither genealogical or essentialising; and one fundamentally based on contemporary social relations rather than a romanticised attachment to the mythical past.

As I write, Bolivians are in a vigorous struggle over the national constitution, both in its written form as well as more generally. Increasingly, the ever shriller debate centres on the right to rule of indigenous peoples, principally of the highlands, and the resistance of lowlanders dominated by an upper class which imagines itself as white. Racism that used to be structural and muted is now becoming increasingly vocal and public (Calla 2008) and on all sides people clutch at historical symbols to assert their legitimacy. It is clear, though, that we must resist the temptation to over-simplify and assume a general historical consciousness. The plurality of histories, and, perhaps much more importantly, historical principles and frameworks, greatly complicates our understanding of political action. The people of Pocobaya may very well be mobilised around an indigenous banner, although to date they have not, but their allegiance and those of similar peoples, cannot be taken for granted.

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Notes

- [1] See *Current Anthropology*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2004) and vol. 47, no. 1 (2006); Kenrick and Lewis (2004); and Barnard (2006).
- [2] See, for example de la Cadena (2000); Canessa (2005); Harris *et al.* (1995); Martínez Novo (2006).
- [3] The full text reads: "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems."
- [4] Felipe Quispe has a long history of indigenous politics but gained greatest prominence in the early years of this century when he successfully besieged the capital city of Bolivia, La Paz, with road blocks time and time again. He has only recently been eclipsed by Evo Morales as the most prominent and successful indigenous leader.
- [5] The word "*chullpa*" also refers to pre-Conquest tombs, often large towers, with windows to the east where the dead were mummified, resembling a corpse that has been burned.
- [6] Atawallpa was the Inca king who was captured by the Spanish in Cajamarca in 1532. Tupak Katari led a revolt against Spanish rule in the 1780s and was indeed quartered by horses in 1783. This conflation of the two could be understood as a confusion or as a recognition that the basic relationship between coloniser and colonised remained essentially unchanged over this period.
- [7] The story is, in fact, complicated by a land war with a neighbouring community which led to the destruction of Pocobaya before the revolution broke out. I have discussed this at length elsewhere, (Canessa 2009).

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